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J. P. Smith

THE RAGIAD.

A POEM.

BY

ALFRED MITCHELL.

" Good workmen never quarrel with their tools."—*Byron*.

RICHMOND, VA.
1855-6.



THE
RAGIAD:

A POETICAL DISCOURSE ON RAGS;

WITH

OCCASIONAL FLASHES

AT

MEN AND THINGS.

IN TWO PARTS.

RICHMOND:

DECEMBER 1855.

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P R E F A C E.

The following poem is presented to the public for their perusal. Though its subject is not at all popular, it must be admitted it is one of great importance. It is not understood by persons who are in the habit of looking on the surface of things; and hence they cannot be expected to look beyond the prejudices of previously conceived opinions in relation to those who gather rags, though by the industry and self-sacrifice of these heroic people, (I say heroic, for they brave all the consequences of the aforesaid prejudices!) are obtained the very paper on which is served up that intellectual feast which is so important to the constitution and habits of so many of us, as well as that which wraps the sugar that qualifies their dear tea! Children may be excused for reproaching the poor ragman with the uncivil epithet of "RAGAMUFFIN;" (for these may not know the import of their language any farther than they are mouth-pieces of their seniors;) but for old persons to give themselves to such contemptible manifestations of their prejudices, as have been evinced of late, on certain occasions, within this city, towards persons who serve paper-makers with rags, neither argues good taste nor good sense; though some of these, no doubt, think themselves possessed of all the learning of the schools, without having looked within a book; and justified in reflecting upon persons of this class, from the polish their own minds manifest in contradistinction to what they suppose a ragman ought

to be possessed of. It is unnecessary to say anything more on this head in this place. I will just say it is only intended a part of this poem shall go before the public at this time; and, with their approbation, the rest at another time. As I propose to be the champion of whatever is honest—and whatever is honest is always profitable, no matter how opposed it may be to our false pride, so it coincides with our natural or unbiassed ideas of justice or right,—I have thought proper to defend, on the one hand, in this style, those who have been ridiculed, on the other, in a less polite and rational manner.

THE AUTHOR.

THE RAGIAD:

A POETICAL DISCOURSE ON RAGS:

WITH OCCASIONAL FLASHES AT MEN AND THINGS.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

AWAKE, O Muse! and tune my sportive pen,
To sing the praise of rags—if not of men!
The theme is vulgar, I will quite admit—
But let that pass—there is a humor in it.
I'll rattle on, as if at work or play,
Though rhymes are things that stubbornly obey!
But little caring whom they suit or fit—
I have my whim, if they should show no wit.
Thus my Pegasus, be he weak or strong,
Will often hint at *right* nor spare the *wrong*.
So here's for verse—I'll publish through the town,
Nor care a farthing if I swim or drown!

AN APOSTROPHE TO RAGS.

O rags! ye are indeed most useful things!
 Your praise from Mexico to England rings!
 For printing paper springs alone from ye!
 Ye graceless vagrants that we hate to see!

IRONICAL.

None own their rags—the beggar holds his nose,
 And with contemptuous toss he onward goes!
 Fair milliners will lay them snugly by,
 But, when in public, will the name decry!
 And milliners, you know, have nice *clean* rags,
 All pack'd away in two to twelve pound bags!
 While some fair ladies of a higher class,
 May sell their rags—such rags will always pass—
 But yet they beckon you to their back door,
 Where less conspicuously they strew the floor!

DEFERENTIAL.

If these disown such rags—what must we say
 Of all those rags that lazards throw away?—
 Those dirty vagrants of a dunghill's pile,
 That lounging ragmen have pronounced *as vile*!
 But be consol'd, ye pliant *useful* things,
 Your prototypes have cloth'd the proudest kings;
 And after serving them in their attire,
 Have served the statesman to record his ire!

PALPABLE.

And country folk, whene'er they come to town,
 Feel proud when rigg'd in homespun coat or gown!

The king, when in his royal robes array'd,
 Feels more exalted by their finer grade;
 And when bedeck'd with diadem or crown,
 Feels just such pride as may puff up a clown!
 The dandy views his ruffles, and feels proud
 As some gay peacock in a jackdaw crowd!
 The ambling maiden feels a two-fold grace,
 When tripping through the streets in Brussels lace;
 And ugly people have a great desire
 To strike beholders with their gay attire:
 And hence they rally with phylacteries on,
 To syllable themselves sublimely born,
 And claim from thence a more exclusive right
 To 'clipse the worthy in the public sight!

EXPLANATORY.

Who are the worthy?—let it here be said
 Not him who *claims*, but he who *earns* his bread!
 Whether he gather rags, or plough or sow
 A public benefit therefrom will flow:
 For rags when cast aside as useless trash,
 Are bought by ragmen and turn'd into cash;
 And they who buy from these, grind them to paste,
 Whence springs all paper that may suit your taste:
 Else rags might be the dunghill's rightful spoil,
 And thus curtail that useful field of toil!

PERSONAL.

How much do printers owe to paper-mills!
 How much the world to printers and their quills!
 When Homer sung and strung his tuneful lyre,
 There was no printer to record his fire!—

No type and press to give the bard due scope—
 But, thanks to printing! have his works from Pope!
 The wars of Troy had mov'd the bard to song,
 Bold, grand and full he pours his notes along!
 And in their cadence lives a pathos too,
 Which some may imitate, but none outdo!
 And Byron, in a verse of matchless mould,
 Cloth'd Harold with a grandeur all high-soul'd,
 Except what sprung from Homer's master-lyre,
 You find no poem that will more inspire!
 The Grecian bard relied upon a pen
 To give his poems to the sons of men!
 And no reward he elaim'd in those pure days,
 In thus communicating his grand lays:
 The British bard had printers at his will,
 And when he chose could tax their plastic skill!
 But all would dwindle were it not for rags,
 And printers be a set of useless *vags* :
 Authors, editors and types be mute,
 Till something else were fashion'd that might suit.
 Perhaps the telegraph might fill the void,
 Through public criers, to be so employ'd?
 Which few could use to any great extent,
 And none without incurring discontent.

CONCILIATORY.

So rags are a conservative, as seen;
 And ragmen useful, though denounced as *mean*
 I bow subserviently to ye, O rags!
 Before your potency there nothing flags!
 There flows from ye a most redundant stream
 Of literature, o'erflow'ng many a ream!

But yet refreshing many a sterile soil,
 With classic vigor, that repays our toil !
 But notwithstanding these most grand results,
 Both rags and ragmen meet with *some* insults !
 But be ye thank'd, ye much-neglected things !
 Ye can't *be* missed so long as ye *have wings* ?
 And be consol'd, ye rag-collecting few,
 Your toils deserve our thanks, which is your due !

COMPLIMENTARY.

And now to ladies fair, or dandies fine,—
 That love, like butterflies, to flare and shine,—
 I pay my court to you, with my respects,
 Particularly to the female sex !
 For from you springs redundancy of rags,
 That find their way to serving-men or hags ;
 And when worn out by this incessant race,
 They come, through ragmen, to the proper place !
 How pleasant silks of glossy hue to see,
 And cloths that rouse a dandy's ecstasy !
 Like butterflies with wings of varied die,
 That tempt some youth in warm pursuit to fly !
 But silk won't answer to make paper from,
 And woollen rags, till lately, were but scum !
 But these are not the kind that are in use,
 Your royal printing paper to produce ;
 For Linen only serves that useful end,
 Connected with kind Cotton as its friend !
 Thus all the diff'rent grades of paper spring,
 From such old rags as I have sung or sing !
 Therefore, there can be nothing more sublime,
 Than rags—at least they are so in their prime !

SATIRICAL.

This fact the pleasure-loving throng must own,
 On hyperbolean wings they oft are borne !
 The fair trip forth in bonnets, black or white,
 With waving plumes that touch an anchorite :
 And dandies chatter with lascivious glee,
 When harnessed in that gear they like to see !
 E'en-snobs and tinkers, licensed from their shops,
 Strut forth, on Sundays, in the garb of fops !
 And dip and swagger with an ugly pace,
 Seized with the *mania* of Sir Coxcomb's grace !
 The dandy with his rattan flails his boots,
 As, with a gesture, he the action suits :
 From his loose tongue his ready gossip flows,
 While from its nook his pocket 'kerchief shows.
 His coat, his pantaloons, his waistcoat too,
 The very tip of fashion, black or blue :
 His ruffles, plaited by a handy maid,
 Are 'neath a velvet waistcoat gently laid,
 Surmounted by a pin of shining gold,
 Which throws a lustre o'er each snowy fold ;
 And when, with grace, he has his hands unglov'd,
 He shows two idols—by himself beloved !
 His scented fingers taper to their points,
 Without a wrinkle to distort their joints ;
 And these with rings are set off, to entice
 Those lovely eyes that like to see things nice ;
 The while a hat that suits a graceful brow,
 By one such hand is lifted with a bow !

O Rags ! how many offices ye fill !
 Would that ye had the tongue of whip-poor-will,
 That ye might tell the prides of heart that rise,
 When gazed upon by Vanity's vain eyes ;

And sing the uses ye are made to serve,
 With all the sweetness of the turtle-dove !
 The very paper whereon now I write,
 Were rags, perchance, that would disgust the sight ;
 And ere transform'd to serve their present use,
 Had cloth'd the back of some fastidious goose ?
 Your gilt-edged paper makes a fairer show,
 And serves the purpose of a foppish beau :
 It once was linen of the finest flax,
 And serv'd a maiden, fairest of her sex :
 Was look'd upon with pleasure and delight,
 And was a close companion day and night !
 When too unfit to claim her ardent care,
 It found its way to some less favor'd fair—
 Descended thence an humbler sphere to fill,
 And thence, through ragmen, to a paper-mill.

The " Whig," " Dispatch," and other papers rise,
 To greet each morn your ever-longing eyes :
 'Tis pleasant, sure, to sit us down at night,
 And read the doings each may bring to light !
 Both in political and local news
 These several papers teem—so pick and choose :
 If pure Democracy invite your taste,
 There's the " Enquirer," urging your embrace,
 That led your Democrats in times of yore,
 And to *lead* you—is ready at your door !
 And if Dame Whiggery woo you to her side,
 There is the " Whig"—a paper of some pride ;
 Whose thundering columns you commence at nine,
 Which, if you finish, you will scarcely dine !
 Not that their attic or their wit enchants
 But their great length will *all* your time enhance !

In all your schools of politics, you learn
 Some weighty truths, no matter how they turn;
 And each upon the other acts as guard,
 So the State's int'rests *may* be unimpaired.

If *these* be irksome,—after you have dined,
 In the "Dispatch" a "dessert" you may find!
 A *souvenir* that cools their *lava* down,
 When, from surfeit in politics, they groan!
 But first, of politicians take a view,
 See how they pull the "wire," apply the "screw"!
 From stumps your sylvan Ciceroes proclaim
 Their own great merits, in a windy strain,
 And spin their fustian to such rustic ears,
 That all they say cannot be heard for "cheers"!
 But when they fulminate in public print,
 Each speech goes through the *Editorial Mint*;
 And, as *old coins* that have been *melled* o'er,
 Receive a *gloss* they *scarcely* knew before!
 And there they venture a rhetoric key,
 Which with *originals* WILL not agree!
 But some Demosthenes in word and grace;
 May here spring up to *claim* a *public place*.
 The wily politician takes a hand,
 The cards his schemes, his table all the land;
 He "shuffles" up the pack, and "cuts" and "deals,"
 The voters "trumps," to whom he then appeals;
 And when install'd in place, he pushes on,
 With small regard for them unmix'd with scorn!
 If just and virtuous men should find a place,
 All throw their "hands" up and pronounce it—base;
 Then settle down on some mischievous plot,
 To prove their rivals things—that they are not.

This is political : Now let us trace,
 Thro' the " Dispatch," those scenes of man's disgrace :
 [A paper, by the bye, of sterling note,
 And, as its columns *please*, will onward float :
 Instructive, useful, entertaining, witty,
 Its harvest field is this expanding city.]
 We look the " Local" head, and find in brief,
 The hist'ry of the drunkard and the thief ;
 Those swagg'ring rowdies, of a ceaseless strife,
 Whose maudlin follies eke a bitter life ;
 And those whose envy bids them pluck and steal,
 Might better their conditions with less zeal.

Where is their pride ? Are all their virtues gone ?
 Long wither'd by the fiery eye of scorn ?
 What think they, when their names are thus array'd,
 Are they not shock'd, and of themselves afraid ?
 Do they not doubt their own intrinsic worth,
 When thus they wander from their prides of birth ?
 Or are their consciences all sear'd and scorch'd ?
 Their hearts encased in brass, their minds debauch'd ?
 Their very feelings dead—existence numb'd—
 Their souls to Degradation quite succumb'd ?

Awake, ye sleepers ! if not now too late,
 And rouse yourselves from this lethargic state ;
 Renew the innocence you thus have lost :
 Make an amendment in your lives the cost ;
 And sink in Lethe all your past misdeeds ;
 Time heals the wounds of him who inly bleeds !

Let not my words fall on a senseless ear,
 But let them ring a warning, deep and clear ;
 And he who reads them, may he pause and think,
 Ere he disports upon Destruction's brink :
 And if in Folly he, perchance, has slipp'd,
 Retrace his steps, in Virtue be equipp'd :
 Resume a steady, grave and sober course,
 Which, with the public, has its wonted force :
 Then all your misdeeds will be buried deep,
 In dark Oblivion's unremember'd sleep ;
 No more to haunt you with their chilling shade,
 Without your act—your own debasing aid !

Your politicians, too, may learn to curb
 Those evil passions that our peace disturb!
 All can't be right—some surely must be wrong,
 Though *all* their arguments appear quite strong!
 One seized, at times, with irony and wit,
 Would mitigate his soul in one grand fit;—
 Discharge upon his foe his gather'd ire,
 Contain'd within a speech of many a quire;
 So fill the public ear with his appeals,
 It ekes his fire and like resentment feels!
 Another launches forth with equal skill,
 And rings his accents with prostrating thrill;
 Or dives and dabbles in some muddy pool,
 To torture thence some exculpating rule:
 Some editorial flourish, here or there,
 From Whig or Democrat, I do not care!
 By which he would support his shaken fame,
 And prop the honors of his public name!
 And where, dear people, all this time are you?
 With these Drawcansars—at a “barbacue”?
 Or else in forums of the State impal'd,
 Where all this thunder would have less avail'd.
 'Tis irksome, surely, in a public throng,
 To listen to a speech, though rich and strong;
 If there's no *dinner* to be had—ahead,
 To make their speech seem classic, they well read:
 No smiling goblets, to proclaim the wine
 T' be had *before* and *after* we shall dine!
 This is by way of comment, as I soar—
 As swells my verse with Helleconic lore,
 And whether it be RAGS, or MEN, or THINGS,
 My Muse is mistress—and can use her stings.

ACROSTIC APOSTROPHIC.

A ll-glorious Being ! from thy viewless sphere,
 L ook down on us, the creatures of thy care :
 F orgive the errors from example sprung ;
 R estore our peace, when by those errors wrung :
 E ncircle us by Thy prevailing love,
 D oom'd to the ills that hover from above.

M ost glorious Being ! viewless and unknown,
 I n Thee we live, and move, and breathe alone :
 T hen, from Thy Vastness, kindly view our faults,
 C ontracted here, forgotten in our vaults !
 H ope, like the dove of Noah, hovers o'er
 E xpectancy, from this sin-deluged shore :
 L ulled by her sweet complacency of voice,
 L o ! from our souls we hail her, and rejoice !



CHAPTER III

The first of the three parts of the book is devoted to a general survey of the history of the world, from the beginning of time to the present day. The second part is devoted to a detailed account of the history of the United States, from the first settlement to the present day. The third part is devoted to a detailed account of the history of the British Empire, from the first settlement to the present day.

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TO THE PUBLIC.

RICHMOND, with all its diversified scenery, within and around its suburbs, has failed to call forth the inspired bard, armed with Pallasian lore, and touched with the fire Apollo rarely lends to a favored few, to change the dull monotony of prosaic life into a fairy scene of unimaginable ecstasy.

Prose is as a wild and rugged wood, without order, and undiversified with hill and dale, dull with monotony, and gloomy with its shade.

Poetry is as a beautiful grove, spread with a rich and lively green, interspersed with roaring cataracts and gently murmuring streams; with singing birds, unfading flowers, and sparkling pebbles with varied hue; and all enchanted with an all-pervading spirit.

A. MITCHELL.

Richmond, Va., 1856.

2 parts

THE
RAGIAD.

A POEM.

BY

ALFRED MITCHELL.

T. BAILIE, PRINTER.
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.
1856.

The first of these is the fact that the
 year 1601 was a year of extreme
 cold in England. The weather was
 so cold that the ground was frozen
 and the people were suffering from
 the cold. The second fact is that
 the year 1602 was a year of
 famine in England. The people
 were suffering from lack of food
 and the government was unable to
 provide them with food. The third
 fact is that the year 1603 was a
 year of plague in England. The
 plague was so severe that it killed
 many people. The fourth fact is
 that the year 1604 was a year of
 fire in England. The fire was so
 large that it burned down many
 houses. The fifth fact is that the
 year 1605 was a year of rebellion
 in England. The rebels were
 fighting against the king and the
 government. The sixth fact is that
 the year 1606 was a year of
 peace in England. The king and
 the government were at peace with
 the rebels. The seventh fact is
 that the year 1607 was a year of
 war in England. The king and
 the government were at war with
 the rebels. The eighth fact is
 that the year 1608 was a year of
 peace in England. The king and
 the government were at peace with
 the rebels. The ninth fact is that
 the year 1609 was a year of
 war in England. The king and
 the government were at war with
 the rebels. The tenth fact is that
 the year 1610 was a year of
 peace in England. The king and
 the government were at peace with
 the rebels.

The year 1601 was a year of
 extreme cold in England.

The year 1602 was a year of
 famine in England.

SYNOPSIS OF THE DISCOURSE.

- I. The poem opens with an apostrophe to the Muse, and an implied desire to escape a similar category with the doggerel emanations of some over-rated modern pretenders. It decorates a beauty in all the charms of dress, and sends her forth admiring and admired; and shews that the vestment, on which her pride had been fixed, loses at last its pristine charm, like old friends in adversity, and, like them, handed down to burlesque and ridicule—to the maids of her household, who, with imitative pride, sport through the streets, as gay in their own eyes as their mistress was in hers; and, also, when these last shall have been disgusted (after having disgusted) with parading their gaudy equipage, they are handed down to others of a lesser grade, whose pride is kindled for the time being at what to them seems so gay and beautiful; but now falling suddenly into the "sere and yellow leaf" of old age, these last soon make a more congenial disposition of what was once held so sacred. The ragman, like Abaddon, is destined to win, let them be called by whatever name Vanity may suggest.
- II. It next shows the complete burlesque exhibited in our thoroughfares by negroes, and their desire to obviate the contrast which nature has determined shall be a line of distinction, as irrevocable as the daily appearance of light and darkness, by a resort to every device within their reach, which but sets the deformity they so much deplore in a nearer view. And, also, shews, where means are at the disposal of the sable race, their great desire to compete, on a larger scale, with the fashionable world, in the most ridiculous and amusing comparisons;—that men, whose interests point them to mere dollars and cents, are blind to all colors; and, though they inly chuckle, with a volume of rare conceits suffused through their minds, at the time they are catering to the vanity of these forlorn actors, cannot suppress the consciousness of the ill-timed service. The tailor's page, disgusted with the empti-

SYNOPSIS.

ness of the assumed grace of his sable patron, suppresses a smile, but encourages his vanity by inviting him to renew his call, and then wends his way home. On his way, he finds many thronging the thoroughfares—all uneasy in their minds, alike when with nothing to do as with more than the short space of life demands. These, too, supply the ragman and the paper-maker, and speculators in the article, with increment, as certain as Beelzebub will reap the field his agents shall sow.

- III. It next shows that many are brought to rags by a too great indulgence in those follies which none of the wise regard and none of the foolish reward, in any other manner than as a passive spectacle, admired, objected to, or repudiated.
- IV. It next discourses on the inordinate desire for place, through the insatiable thirst for its emolument.
- V. It shows the ragman as a useful agent in the field of his labours, contending with pride and arrogance in all the sickening forms of anti-christian display; and he, as victorious in his humble department as unwittingly the means of supplying many sources of profit, pecuniary and literary.
- VI. And last, It shows the gaudy dandy, possessed of ample means, blessed with friends, generous and liberal in himself, brought to rags and disgrace, and almost to suicide; but declining this last alternative, resolves to live, treads the beaten paths of mendicancy and vice, and, remembering his former state, scorns the aliens that have been wafted by Mammon to an eminence unsuitable to their anti-patrician tempers; and hence, having a classic mind to supply his loss of fortune, is elevated (though degraded in one sense) to an eminence sublime in comparison with those who have nothing but glittering vehicles, fashionable dress, castles and fine furniture to recommend them. But he forgets himself and mingles with depravity in many shapes, until his fine clothes are threadbare, and he, in the end, soliloquizes on their departed offices.

THE RAGIAD.

PART II.

PLAIN truths, O Muse! befit a modern pen,
When its appeals are made to sober men:
Not those all giddy with the lust of gain,
Nor those prëeminently proud in vain;
But those who in themselves can trace defect,
And yield to others what themselves expect:
A heart-felt leniency, sublimely born,
Too chaste to censure, and too just to scorn.
And since, O Muse! thy will is to inspire,
And touch thy fav'rites with thy sacred fire,
O! may no puling strain my Lyre debase,
Thus consecrated by thy Delphic grace.

My theme was rags, and of their use I sung:
From what had flatter'd pride had paper sprung!
New from the loom, with gaudy dies array'd,
I proved them idols of each pretty maid:
Old and defaced, by service or neglect,
They were detested by the female sex.

Gay through the town the gladden'd beauty wends,
From whose fair form the costly shawl depends;
Her small white hands with golden rings array'd,
And tasty bonnet, with its plummy shade

All waving to the breeze, that gently blows
And woos her cheeks to emulate the rose :
Her small white feet, with gaiters softly grac'd,
And silken belt around her person plac'd ;
While from a nook, her golden watch suspends
Its lavish chain, that o'er her girdle wends,
And from her temples wind her glossy curls,
The praise of men, the envy of the girls.
Now this fair she, thus gay and thus attir'd,
Steps forth, the while, the idol most admired :
She on her garments looks with keen delight,
Their fashion wins and entertains her sight ;
Her nodding plumage stirs her maiden pride,
Her golden watch and chain adorn her side ;
Her hand uplifted, studded with rich rings,
Attracts the light and borrowed lustre flings ;
She glides along with soft and winning air,
Rich necklace grace her neck, and gems her hair ;
Her figur'd shawl hangs negligently grand ;
Her hair environed by a golden band ;
Her glossy curls now tremble in the breeze,
And all, united, never fail to please.
The linen, cambric, muslin, and the gauze,
That grace her person, have their destin'd pause :
When rent or blemish shall their beauty mar,
They're thrown aside with supercilious air ;
Her maids or servants share these parts of dress,
And, feeling flatter'd, now their thanks express.
The sable maidens then their mistress ape,
In gaudy flounces each disguise their shape :
The rich embroidery, white as driven snow,
Upbraids the ebon cheek that will not glow ;
And costly silks, that rustle as they go,
Attract observance that distastes the show.

Their black and horny hands gold rings display,
And ruffles on their wrists, confess them gay;
Artistic curls o'er ebon cheeks depend,
The cast-off tresses of their Saxon friend;
Their glitt'ring feathers from their bonnets glare
(Wave in the breeze, as church-ward they repair,)
Eclipse their sable compeers, and demean
The less conspicuous in the gaudy scene.
Distended gaiters their huge feet adorn,
Such as their peerless mistress once had worn
Soft silken hose, that graced a fairer leg,
Are now disfigured by a brawny hag;
And mantelets, that girded sacred waists,
On sable maidens fit with much distaste;
And ear-rings, dangling from their punctur'd ears,
Expose these maidens to *derisive* jeers:
Yet view'd as ladies of unrivall'd charms,
By negro dandies, who disport in swarms:
Flock through the streets with supercilious air,
And boldly venture where their masters dare:
These ape superior graces, and confound
Just words of sense with words of labor'd sound:
Disguise good manners in grotesque parade,
And end with burlesque all they thus invade.
The graceful wave of hand, the courteous bow,
The mild benignity that lights the brow,
Among civilians known, and oft express'd,
In easy blandishments, to those address'd,
Are counterfeited by the sable race,
With pompous gestures unallied with grace.

These sable gentlemen and dusky maids,
Crowd all our thoroughfares and promenades:
The Afric now assumes the Saxon pride,
The male and female these extremes divide:

The mistress imitated by her maid,
The master by the gallant of the jade !
Those shawls now worn by gentlemen of state,
(Although not always by the wise or great,)
As badges to express patrician birth,
Or else as tokens of their civil worth,
Each dusky fop with impudence assumes,
Like some vile negress lavish of perfumes ;—
Thus rend'ring void, through such usurp'd abuse,
This civil requisite of late in use !

Loud laughs the negro in a gaudy dress,
Elated by the metamorphosis :
First, then, to screen his contumelious wool,
O'er his huge head a pliant wig he'd pull :
That done, in vain he'd try to change his skin,
(The changeless impress of Ham's fatal sin,
The ebon die that mingles with his blood,
Dates its first impulse from the Noëan flood,)
And shun the fiat of recorded fate,
That fix'd his destiny in ev'ry state !
Man cannot free him—to himself a slave :
Laws will not shield him from a curse so grave.
But, as he never can his skin elude,
His vile complexion is, therefore, endur'd ;
And his small intellects are task'd in vain,
To mitigate the all-upbraiding stain !
Hence, where influenced by example's spell,
His meagre soul with far-fetched fancies swell:
Drinks in the spirit of the glitt'ring crowd,
And, filled from thence with gas, is madly proud.
Now, aping his superiors, he assumes
Airs foreign to himself, and suitless plumes.

The wig arrang'd upon his giddy head,
Conceal'd its native growth, which was his dread !
The glossy locks now o'er his shoulders glide,
And rouse the dormant energies of pride.
He next proceeds to win, by dint of dress,
An elevation which the vain confess :
Forth to a tailor he at once proceeds,
(Who, with his shears in hand, all custom heeds,)
And has his measure taken for a coat,
Whose fashion shall attest the wearer's note :
This finished, by the tailor's ready skill;
According to the sable dandy's will,
Is now examined with consummate care,
To see that all its parts to taste adhere.
The tailor, conscious of his plastic art,
Provokes the vanity that sways the heart,
And bids the garment make its own appeal,
With speechless eloquence that dandies feel ;
His sable customer with pleasure views
The costly vesture, with its gloss profuse,
And at the tailor's sanction, tries it on,
To see if aught is wanting ere 'tis worn.
He now confesses, with an eye of pride,
The exultations that in taste reside,
And bids his tailor send his coat and bill,*
Directly to his house on Shockoe Hill !
He takes his leave with supercilious bow,
The tailor following with distended brow,
In much amaze at such a rareé-show,
Forever prating like the noisy crow ;
With Saxon hair and anti-Saxon skin,
And nose depressed, and elongated chin :
Large eyes, diffusing forth a sickly glare,
From orbs demented in an idiot stare :

* His account.

Broad mouth, redeemed by teeth of purest white,
And lips too thick to close, compress'd and tight;
Huge feet, that flounder in an awkward gait,
And legs too spare to prop his pond'rous weight;
Long arms that to and fro incessant wave,
And innate vices tending to deprave!
The tailor's boy, now on his errand sent,
O'er Shockoe Hill his hasty steps are bent,
In quest of one who lives in such a row,
On such a street with title on his door.
The boy, accustomed to such jaunts before,
Soon finds the house, though hidden and obscure:
The gate, upon the street, he passes through,
Ascends the porch, a bell attracts his view;
His hand upon the silver handle laid,
'Tis gently drawn, the summons then obey'd:
A giddy negress to the door repairs,
With lightsome heart, unscath'd by daily cares:
The yielding lock the cunning key obeys,
As through the wards, with force, it winds or plays:
The door, upon its hinges, waving in,
The maid and urchin at each other grin;
Some courtesies exchang'd, his business nam'd,
(In double-dealing, like his master, fam'd,)
The maid conducts him to the hall direct,
Where showy mirrors all its parts reflect.
Now, from his seat, with philosophic pride,
The sable dandy casts a glance aside.
"Come hither boy, (he said,) make known your will;
Have you the coat I order'd, and the bill?
Let's see that label, on the collar pinn'd!"
(The boy display'd the coat, and archly grinned;)
"Ah! good; 'tis my address. Now let me see
If its proportions and my bulk agree:"

And this he said, as from his back he drew
The olden garment and put on the new.)
"They do: an admirable fit indeed!
Your master has my thanks, the usual meed;
So faithful to his trust, in this respect,
I scarcely in his bill can fraud suspect;
Which, as he chose to sign, I now will pay,
And thus my obligation sweep away!"

So spake the dandy; ere he left the hall,
His shadow trembling on the mirror'd wall;
And forth he strode in quest of wretched gold;
A tyrant that the world has long control'd!
He paid his bill with knightly air and grace;
The sunshine of the heart illumines his face;
He puts the evidence of debt away,
Like good accountants who but *once* will pay!
The grinning urchin seeks his master's shop,
Waves an adieu, and leaves the gaudy fop:
With hat in hand, departing from the hall,
He urg'd the dandy to renew his call;
As courtier-like, he twirled his pliant hat,
Skillful to please and overstock'd with chat.
The street is gained; his active limbs he plies,
And to his master's shop, delighted flies.
From Clay to Marshall, now he sweeps along,
And joins, in Broad-Street, the incessant throng:
Some wand'ring idly, little else to do,
And some too busy, airy dreams in view;
So bent on gaining, what will scarce repay
The self-denial of each arduous day:
The idle, in extremes of folly lost—
The ardent, missing what they prize the most;

Instead of seeking in a medium walk,
The hoped-for joys of which they fondly talk,
All idly they diverge to what inthralls,
Or bow to Mammon, who but few installs.
Supinely one, unheeding public gaze,
Disports through life, disdaining blame or praise;
Weds airy Indolence, and makes his life
The fruitful field of inauspicious strife;
Another, with insatiate thirst for *more*,
Woos every wave that wafts to Fortune's shore:
Tries every scheme that may advance his hopes,
Now in the light, and now in darkness gropes:
Now flushed with prospects, sanguine of his prize;
And now oppress'd with gloomy reveries:
Through the dull day, in irksome suff'rance bound,
And through the night depress'd by sleep unsound;
Care-worn and baffled, as his prospects fade,
Sighs forth his soul, till wasted to a shade:
Sunk to despondency, he hails the wave,
That wafts from life to the sequester'd grave:
Or else, when flushed with hope, and borne along,
Feels, in himself, indomitably strong;
Saps ev'ry source, propitious of success;
Bars from his soul the whispers of distress;
Mounts on Ambition's ever-eager wings,
And dares the utmost Opposition bring;
Contests, undaunted, each despoiling foe,
And wins or loses either weal or woe!
If prospects brighten, unabash'd he stands,
His pride determines as his hope expands,
And naught can stay him in his mad career,
But that sad portal that attends the bier.

Wild, through the town, the office-hunter bends,
His frantic steps, in quest of votes or friends :
Each petty perch invites its flock of crows,
From whose loud tongues more noise than music
flows :

The hoped-for perch is far above the ground—
What all desire to reach, but one has found !
Each noisy crow puts in his plea for place,
And to attain his end all means embrace :
They lash each other with their clam'rous tongues.
Supply their want of brains with vig'rous lungs !
Afar we view the tumult and the strife,
Opposing civil death to civil life ;
Amidst the flock of crows the clans now glance,
And name the fav'rite that they would advance ;
Their sev'ral friends with readiness bestow,
Their grains of corn on each palav'ring crow.
At night, the grains of corn in heaps are plac'd ;
Within each heap, are chosen names embrac'd ;
The grains of corn that now compose each heap
The scribes have counted, and a record keep :
Next day, if need be, they prolong the sport,
And scour the suburbs to obtain a vote :
Loud exultations by the crows are made,
O'er every grain of corn the clans parade :
The highest perch, some lucky crow attains,
From the possession of more num'rous grains ;
Then other perches, nearer to the ground,
By other crows, with like success, are found.
These happy roosts are in a lofty oak,
To which this flock of crows, with rapture, look :
Its spreading boughs attract their longing eyes,
And hence their efforts and desire to rise :

Its trembling leaves entail a fond delight,
 Shades in the day and gladdens in the night ;
 Secures their nests and brood from prowling harm,
 That threatens in full many a direful form ;
 Where, from its bowers, they, at times, alight
 In fruitful fields, expanding on their sight ;
 Soar over fields of newly planted maize,
 And pluck the grain that in its furrow lays ;
 In loud harangues o'er stacks of wheat debate,
 And on the grain, their empty stomachs safe :
 With usual cunning, previously survey
 The ground they would invade, from some high tree,
 There reconnoitre, with a ranger's skill,
 To scent or ferret out the lurking ill :
 Where danger threatens, spread their ready wings,
 In act to fly from all that danger brings ;
 But where peace beckons, circling in their flight,
 They seem to soar away, but soon alight !
 The victors* now the votive spoils assail,
 The vaunted forfeiture of those that fail :
 Loud rings the welkin with their glad huzzas,
 Each chosen crow the victor-elans applause !
 Long roars the revel through the startled night,
 And bacchanalian reels conclude the rite !

And since, O Muse ! 'tis thus that thou would'st scan
 The varying passions of that riddle man,
 O may'st thy sacred torch illumine my soul,
 And give its issues to my pen's control !

The rosy damsel, elegantly dressed,
 My Muse has summon'd, and her charms confess'd ;

* Partisan crows.

Chance eighteen summers have those charms
matur'd,

Her name is now enroll'd in Beauty's code ;
She glides along, the focus of all eyes ;
Her equipage, for fashion, takes the prize :
Her cheeks, in sooth, with blooming roses vie ;
The diamond's lustre pales before her eye :
Her graceful mouth each rosy lip reveals,
Which, when disparted, make their fond appeals :
Small tap'ring fingers, henna-tinctur'd nails,
Ingrafted fairly, each a charm entails :
Small feet and ankles, grac'd with silken hose,
The first in gaiters, half the last disclose :
A forehead smooth, with no distended front ;
Less high than broad, more rounding and less blunt ;
Where wit may sport and playful fancy dwell,
Those faries of the mind's pellucid cell !
Then all this grace and comeliness must be
Deck'd in the robes on which her tastes agree.
When time shall soil the ensigns of her pride,
For more conspicuous they are thrown aside,
Then, that which once adorn'd this lovely maid,
Descends to rags, through ev'ry lessening grade ;
And hence this beauty serves a useful end,
To yield the impetus these rags attend !
When from her person they at first are thrown,
In their descent with honors they are borne :
First, from her hands her maids receive the prize,
With gratitude that sparkles from their eyes :
When these, her sable maideps, shall deface
Their pristine comeliness and glossy grace,
They, like their mistress, with less haughty air,
Cast forth their garments to more humble fair.

In these, elate with pride, they now disport,
 And then, to humbler friends, their rags devote.
 These tear to tatters all the sacred things,
 'Till lo! a ragman, and the welkin rings!
 Prone from his back a dirty sack extends,
 Who, to its growing bulk, with skill attends:
 His cry is, Rags!—a doleful cry indeed—
 But ears, however nice, the cry will heed!
 With pipe in mouth, much taken with his trade,
 He seeks a house, its premises invade:
 Its mistress, then, consigns him to her maid!
 The maid, delighted, trips away in haste,
 To gather up her rags, much prized tho' base.
 Meantime, she bids him wait within the yard,
 'Till her return (a mandate no ways hard!)
 Now here and there, with timely haste she sweeps,
 And culls the cotton from the dusty heaps;
 Shakes, and divests them of abhorrent dust,
 For fear the ragman might express disgust.
 This done, she ties them up and issues forth,
 That he may weigh them, and pronounce their
 worth.

With business tact he lays each bundle bare,
 And scans their contents with prudential care;
 Then, with his scales,* he ascertains their weight,
 Himself and maid, alternate, in debate,
 'Till both concur in what the one may state.
 Their value told, he pays the maid the cash,
 And in his bag he puts the dirty trash!
 Meantime, the mistress of the mansion calls,
 Her servant-girl within her stately walls.
 Obedient to her call, the servant flies—
 The mistress, on her servant, rolls her eyes:

* Patent balances used by collectors of rags.

The maid inquiring her supreme desire,
Responds to what her mistress would inspire.
First, in obedience to her mistress' will,
She bids the unquiet Knight of Rags be still!
Who, full as patient to endure fatigue
As he is competent to foil intrigue,
Weighs, in his mind, each misadventure's rise,
That shifts from him the speculative prize,
And, with a moral fortitude, his own,
Enjoys, when gain'd, what lost, he will not moan!
Knows well to nerve his soul against caprice,
That springs, anon, to sap the heart-felt peace;
Baffles that paltry whisper of dispraise,
That follows the detractor's dubious gaze,
And turns the red dilating eye of scorn
Back on his breast, where he has much to mourn!
Meantime, the lady and her servant-maid,
• Had sought a closet where her rags were laid;
There, stow'd away in sweetly scented bags,
Were seen the long accumulating rags;
Forth, where they hung, the servant took them
down,
And bore them, proudly, to the mutt'ring clown;
The clown receiv'd them with a practised smile,
The cunning artifice of faithless guile:
The maid not noticing nor smiles nor frowns,
Look'd on all ragmen as a sort of clowns;
And, hence, not sensitive about his looks,
No more than ladies of their greasy cooks!
The ragman, in return, look'd back on these;
As on a savoury dish of lamb and peas;
On which he would, with all his heart, have din'd,
Could he their ladyships have but inclin'd!

But now the rags before his eyes were spread,
 And he was cat'ring for his daily bread ;
 Clean, bleach'd and soft, they entertain'd his sight
 With speculations, pregnant of delight.
 He viewed their quality, reserv'd and shy,
 So as to seem unwilling now to buy ;
 But inly flatter'd with the glowing prize,
 That rose before his speculating eyes,
 He search'd the bags with his accusom'd skill;
 For linen, premium'd at the Franklin mill !
 There was abundance sprinkled through the bags,
 Together with the best of cotton rags !
 Agreeing with her ladyship and maid,
 He drew his scales forth, and the rags he weigh'd, }
 Then took them hence when he the cash had paid. }
 As Samson did, with Gaza's pond'rous gate,
 So reel'd the Knight of Rags beneath their weight ;
 He bears them, onward, through the public streets ;
 The laughing stock of ev'ry fool he meets ;
 Safe, at his humble home, arriv'd at last,
 Forth, on the floor, the irksome rags are cast :
 He seats himself in contemplative mood,
 The while his wife prepares his homely food ;
 When this is ready, with accusom'd care,
 She sets her table, and spreads out the fare :
 Meantime, the mind of her affianced lord,
 Was busy contemplating scènes abroad ;
 Throughout the realms of rags his fancy stray'd ;
 The adverse and the favor'd state survey'd ;
 Traced to their causes, all the dire effects,
 That tend to madden those they daily vex :
 Thus one, whose father leaves him land and slaves !
 Devotes to frolic what is spar'd by knaves.

He goes to college while his parent lives,
And all his energies to learning gives.
A start so promising, the sire infers,
Would lead to glory in maturer years :
Alas ! for him, his watchful sire is dead,
And time entangles life's delinquent thread.
A fair estate descends into his hands,
And lust, unbridled, eschews curbing bands ;
Hence, on the wings of Folly, he is borne,
Till destitution bids its minion moan !
His Sabbaths, in gay buggies, were beguil'd ;
Usurers at the coxcomb inly smil'd :
Away, his heedless steps he turns, nor stays,
A gaudy flutt'rer in the public gaze :
Away, all heedless and entranc'd, he goes,
The fated victim of a host of woes !
He draws his income, and the money wastes
In scenes of folly that the young embrace :
Forgetful of his accademic fame,
He sinks, supinely, in the lap of shame !
As zealous, now, in that which leaves him base,
As once desirous of the schoolman's grace.
First, with gay dress, he emulates the fop,
Whose mania, settled, interdicts a stop ;
Plays to the fool with every gaudy sign,
And wastes his substance through his zeal to shine !
Now, mortgages his fruitful fields assail,
His negroes, seized by sheriffs, are in jail :
The first with growing interests may respire,
The last the auctioneer will sell or hire,
And, finally, they both are swept away,
By usury, through its omnific sway !

Prone in the dust, the victim of his pride,
 Now rolls his baleful eyes from side to side ;
 No friend steps forth to pledge the timely aid,
 And stay the spoiler that may thus invade ;
 No potent arm its wasting influence lends—
 The want of money robs us of our friends !
 Now sunk, remorseful, to his low estate,
 The fallen dandy execrates his fate.
 Thus cast to poverty, and self-debased,
 He sinks still deeper, and is more disgraced !
 His now unbridled lusts, in arms, conspire
 To stifle in his soul each just desire :
 Disdainful Infamy, through ev'ry form,
 Impels its victim, by a direful storm :
 Within his ears incessant hisses ring,
 Upbraidings here, and there a witless fling.
 The vulgar herd their feelings now express,
 And taunt the dandy on his fading dress ;
 He, not divested quite of moral worth,
 Contemns them as he would the worms of earth ;
 Makes no reply to all their buzzing stir—
 The sound falls harmless on his heedless ear ;
 While they, attributing his silence more
 To conscious shame, reflected from his woe,
 Now " lay the flattering unction " to each soul,
 And on each other eyes confluent roll !
 The giddy junto he surveys with scorn,
 An impulse of sublime contempt alone ;
 Looks in each eye, (the index of the heart,)
 To trace their conduct to its vulgar start !
 He knowing these, but these *unknowing* him, }
 The first sees deeper than the wat'ry phlegm, }
 The last upon the surface always skim !

But this, the province of superior mind,
 The vulgar herd, unfeeling, cannot find ;
 And, though inflated with its sembling shade,
 They fail to imitate what God has made !
 Superior parts but make the object bright,
 On which blind prejudice aspires to light ;
 She, like that bird* that soars above its prey,
 Guides more by scent than wisdom's mental ray.
 While from her breast expectorations flow,
 That taint the fairest things that earth can show !

The mind that soars, præeminent, in fame,
 Sublimely threads the crooked paths of shame ;
 Looks from mendicity to Mammon's shore,
 Unenvious of the wretch that thence may soar.
 One gifted with bright parts, of tow'ring mind,
 Has seldom with these parts all tact combined :
 Superior intellects, in trade, inthrall—
 As fancy soars, unpinion'd trade must fall.
 Ambitious intellect invades the skies,
 And plucks the fruit that sordid avarice flies,
 Gold, or its purpose, bears a plastic charm,
 That wins to its shrine th' *calculating* swarm ;
 For this, through all the lonely hours of night,
 They bend their intellects and trim their light ;
 No sound awakens from their golden dreams,
 Though gold through labyrinths of labour gleams !
 These are true poets of the Midian school,
 Whose muses bend not to poetic rule,
 But like their prototype, their fancies range,
 On that per cent. that sparkles from Exchange !
 Like him,† they turn their moments into gold,
 Their minds inspire as their muse unfold,
 And what they grasp, they manage, too, to hold !

* The carrion crow.

† Midas!

These speculating bards, deserve some praise,
In thus condensing Midas' golden rays ;
Their heaps out sparkle other poets' wit,
Which have absorb'd full fifty years to get ;
The heaps obtain'd, demand mankind's applause,
Gains hosts of friends, and e'en perverts the laws ;
The poet's verse but wins and charms a few,
And these are such as Mammon never knew !
Let prospects fail, and Fortune's minion lose
The grand emprise, whose shadow he pursues,
Nonpluss'd or baffled, for relief he flies,
To "ardent spirits," and thus slowly dies ;
Or, if more sudden he would reach his end,
He calls, more frantic, on a surer friend.
But if, less hasty, with a wasting drug,
He fear'd to take the life he would not hug ;
Or, rather, shock'd with all the sudden modes
Of taking life, that cunning now affords ;
He should conclude to buffet future fate,
And face the poverty the rich must hate,
Hemm'd and huddled with the meager poor,
He enters now on what he spurn'd before !
His former friends neglect him in the street,
Who, with gay parties, was the first to treat.
The fallen master of a former fame,
Now waives, at will, his once patrician claim,
And sinks, abash'd, among the skulking herd,
As much remember'd as he is rever'd !
Now rags, perspective, flutter in his eyes,
And all his innate pride, indormant, lies,
Now lewdly famous with a lewder crew,
(Flatt'ers less than those whom once he knew,)

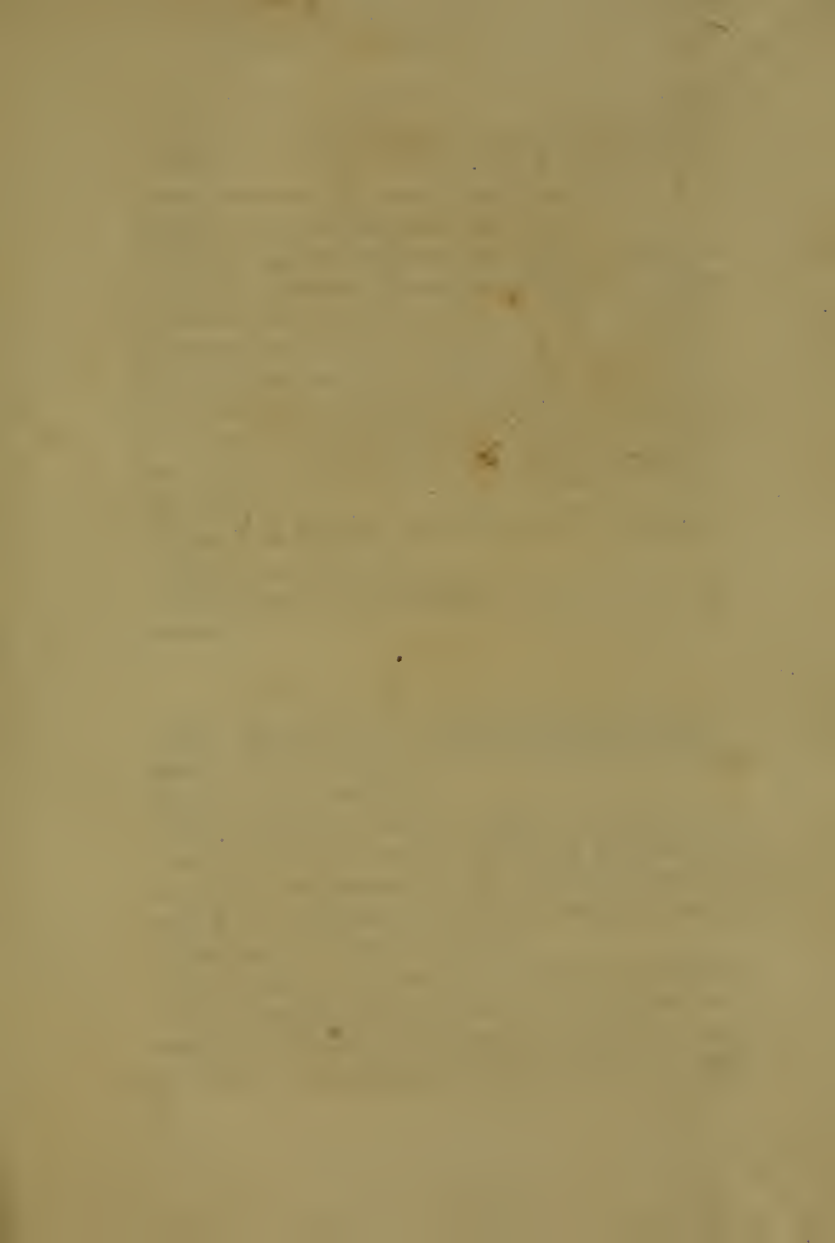
He glides, at will, the oracle confess'd, }
 Amidst a rabble, like himself; distress'd : }
 Anon he's flatter'd, and anon depress'd ! }
 Want, like a spectre of the gloomy night,
 With frightful semblance rises on his sight :
 His clothes are threadbare, from incessant use ;
 His linen tainted with tobacco juice, :
 The first dilemma, he could not avoid ;
 The last, in sooth, he need not have employ'd :
 His clothes descended from his former state ;*
 His mode of chewing, eschewed by the great :
 The first, though many, were now worn and rent ;
 The last a cud that art, not nature, meant !
 Now, in adversity, and all forlorn,
 His clothes to ribbands, from their age, are torn ;
 The upper bathos execrates the low'r,
 Superior vice affects superior show ;
 Through each decade, from eminence, he fell,
 Each *inch* in vice had cost in pride an *ell* ;
 And last, he held companionship with rags,
 And thus soliloquis'd the flaunting vags : †

" O dear companions of my better days !
 Your steadfastness deserves my warmest praise !
 Now worn and wasted by absorbing time,
 Ye are mementos of my days of prime !
 And fond adherents in my sadden'd hours,
 Pride was your germ and lethargy your flow'rs !
 When fresh and new, you were admir'd, and thence
 I took you as my solace and defence :
 Though marr'd and blemish'd, I respect you still,
 And shall, so long as I control my will !
 You, like a poem from the poet's pen,

* Opulence.

† Vagabonds.

Have sparkled in the eyes of gentlemen ;
And with an eloquence unknown in books,
Won that applause which is convey'd in looks !
Once, sheathed in ye, I eked a sage's fame,
'Till rust and blemish sunk you into shame ;
And sooth to say, the mass proclaims *us* great,
The man whose equipage denotes his state ;
Whose gleamy beaver shields a wooden head,
And golden watch-chain sports a ruby red :
With polished boots, 't were a sin to soil,
And curls ambrosial, blessed with scent'd oil ;
A dashing waistcoat, figured rich and deep,
From whose gay folds his gayer ruffles peep,
And sparkling pin, a winning lustre lends,
Which takes the plume among his gaudy friends ;
A coat, whose finish, makes a tailor stare,
And pantaloons of velvet, soft and fair,
And other requisites—to a cigar ! !
This I was once, and would become again,
For dress, alone, supplies the want of brain."



LIST OF CRITICISMS ON THE RAGIAD.

The Editor of the DAILY NATIONAL AMERICAN of April 3d, thus *critically* ani-mad-verts :

“‘THE RAGIAD’—This is the title of a diminutive little volume of verses, the whole constituting “A Poem by ALFRED MITCHELL,” and published by the author in this city. The matter and manner of the ‘Pome’ are not only original in themselves, but have been treated in that manner by the accomplished author. The pamphlet, enveloped as it is in a neat ‘yellow kiver,’ must prove *a great addition to any library.*”

This is a lengthy respiration from a shallow draught,

The Editor of the DISPATCH comments in a shower of

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The WHIG was too busy digesting Governor Wise’s letter on “gizzard-foot and negro-toes,” to attend to such small fry.

The ENQUIRER, like a watchful guardian of DEMOCRACY, was so intent on having justice done that high functionary, to wit, the Governor, by calling an “Indignation Meeting,” that he entirely overlooked the courtesy of a *line*.

The Editor of the ANTI-REPUBLICAN, so utterly scorns everything in the shape of rags, notwithstanding these are the wings on which he soars into office, that a commentary on that subject is equal

to a dose of calomel and jalap. "Remember the pit from which thou wert digged—the hole of the rock out of which thou wert taken!"

Mrs. PARTINGTON expatiates at large, in her usual extra-extravagant style, and concludes by sending me a bale of the article on which the book for the most part treats, labelled "this is the "*Rag-I-add.*" (Ragiad.)

The Editor of the BLUE GIZZARD, being rather bilious, says all poets should be puffed with a pair of bellows, and have a bell man at his heels to keep time with his rhymes.

The Author of the RAGIAD thinks it not indelicate to put in a word among this host of worthies. He thinks the book does not come up to Pope. But he will temper the vein of his Muse to a higher key, when, in verse, he intends to celebrate some very strange things.

The THIRD BOOK of the RAGIAD, which is the most caustic and severe, will be issued as soon as this (the SECOND) shall have been as successful as the FIRST.







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